

## Where does your Help come from?

*"I will lift up my eyes to the hills - From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2)*

The subtitle of **Psalm 121** is "A Songs of Ascents." This is the second Psalm in a sequence of fifteen, from 120 through to 134, which were sung by pilgrims on their way up to Jerusalem to visit the Temple. In this Psalm we find the pilgrim still some way from Jerusalem and considering the journey ahead of him. So in *verse 1* he *"lifts up his eyes to the hills."* Perhaps the hills remind him of the goal of his journey - Jerusalem is situated in the hilly country of Judea - but they most certainly also remind him of the dangers of his journey: The dangers of the climb; the danger of bandits; the danger of heatstroke and exhaustion in the fierce summer heat; the danger of wild animals at night.

As with all journeys toward a God given destination (destiny), there will be opposition (we examined this principle in last week's sermon titled "Discover Your Destiny In God"). Therefore, on the journey toward your destiny you too will need to adopt the same attitude as this pilgrim. It doesn't matter how daunting the mountain ahead of you may seem - your God is **greater!** Why? Simply because God **cares** for you! With the psalmist this prompted the question, *"Where does my help come from?"* The answer was immediate, and emphatic, ***"My help comes from the Lord."*** This is not a wishful cliché, because he goes on to detail reasons for his confidence in God's help and provision. I'd like to look at the psalmist's reasons under two main headings. (1) God is Bigger than our troubles, and (2) God cares about our troubles.

### (1) **God is bigger than your troubles**

The Psalmist is convinced that God can help him because he is the Maker of heaven and earth (verse 2). The pilgrim lifted his eyes to the hills, and what he saw made him anxious. But then he lifts his eyes higher and looks beyond, to the very One who made those hills: *the One who made heaven and earth*. With the Maker Himself on your side there is no need to fear anything that has 'been made'. Nothing is beyond God's reach and control. This is so obviously true, and such a basic point that it might seem hardly worth making. However, this is where the Psalmist chose to start. Sometimes we need reminding of *obvious* truths! When you face anxious times, do your thoughts turn first to our God, the Maker of heaven and earth? Or, do they turn first toward how you need to figure a way out?

### (2) **God cares about your troubles**

In verses 3-8 (*turn there with me*) we find that the psalmist's confidence is built not only on the fact that God is bigger than his troubles, but also on the fact that God **cares** about his troubles. Look how often he repeats the phrase "watches over." ***"The Lord watches over you."*** The Hebrew word the writer uses means *"to keep," "to guard," "to hedge about," "to protect,"* and he uses it 6 times in these six verses. In the NIV (in verse 7) the phrase, ***"The Lord will keep you from all harm,"*** which is a translation of exactly the same Hebrew word. So, the Psalmist is very keen to get over the idea that God keeps watch over His people!

Another feature to notice is the Psalmist's repeated use of the word "you." He is not so much interested in teaching an abstract truth that *"God takes care of people"* (in general); rather he is insistent that we know that God watches over each one of us individually.

And again, if you look at an original translation, or in a commentary, you'll find that it is not the general (plural) "you" that is used, it is the singular (intimate) "you." In Elizabethan English, ***"The Lord watches over thee."*** Here the Psalmist addresses each of his readers as individuals, declaring, *"the Lord watches over you."* What an awesome reassurance this is!

Now, I'd like to unravel *verses 3 to 8* - as we seek to understand the depth of God's **care** for us. In doing so I'll be drawing out three main themes:

(a) The Lord's care is constant.

First, in *verses 3 and 4* we find that the Lord's care is **constant**. Verse 3, ***"He will not let your foot slip - He who watches over you will not slumber."*** God's watch is constant; he is never asleep, never day-dreaming, never distracted and never inattentive. "We can sleep safely because our God is ever awake." In verse 4 we see the reason why He is constantly concerned for our wellbeing. It is because He is constantly concerned for His people. So, if you are a believer, you are a vital part of "His people." God's family is not complete without you! Every member of God's family matters. He constantly cares for you because he cares constantly for His whole family.

(b) The Lord's care is near.

Next, in *verses 5 and 6* we find that the Lord's care is **near** (close by). We often talk about God as if He were a long way away. In Bible language the one 'at your right hand' is your closest ally. One of the greatest perils for any traveller was the fierce heat of the sun, but the promise is that God cares for the pilgrim even through this.

God is near enough to be the shade - take the heat for the traveller. Is your God close enough to take the heat out of the situations you face? Notice, in verse 6, the Lord guards the pilgrim through the perils of the day and the perils of the night, and everything in between. There are no circumstances in which He will abandon the pilgrim. Whatever it is that you are worried about, God is near enough to help you, and there is nothing He will abandon you to face alone.

(c) The Lord's care is ongoing.

Finally, in *verses 7 and 8* we find that the Lord's care is **continuous**. ***"The Lord will keep you from all harm - He will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and for evermore."*** God's concern for the pilgrim of the Psalm doesn't end when he completes his journey; God's commitment to His people is forever, for the greater journey we must each undertake, our journey through life itself. But what are we to make of this promise that the Lord will keep us from all harm? God's promise is to do whatever it takes to keep us safe and secure - that no weapon formed against us will prosper. The Almighty

God is committed to being with us always! The Lord's care is **ongoing**. He is fully engaged with us; making sure we finish the journey. In the end we will look back and know that we were kept safe; that God did shield and protect us from all harm.

The Lord's care is constant, the Lord's care is near and the Lord's care is ongoing.

Now every one of us may get anxious and worry at some time or other. And there are probably three main reasons for this - each of them is addressed in this Psalm.

- (1) The first reason is; deep down you believe that God is unable to take care of you. You may never have the nerve to say it out loud, but underlying your fears is the lack of belief that God is capable of saving you. But as we saw earlier He is the Maker of heaven and earth. If God is God, there is nothing in our lives that He can't deal with. He can help with your problems at work! He can help with your family relationships! He can help with your debt! He is the Lord of your future. But do you really believe it?
- (1) The second reason is; deep down you believe that God is unwilling to take care of you. Are you secretly convinced that God is holding something against you? Are you concerned that you are not good enough for Him? Do you see God as reluctant with His help? As we've seen, that's not the God of the Bible. Our God truly cares for His people.
- (1) The third reason is; you'd simply rather cope on your own. This is perhaps the most common, and the most dangerous. In order to get through life you rely on your intelligence, your job, your charm, your savings, your family, etc. Deep down, you'd rather be self-sufficient; you prefer to do things your own way. But self-sufficiency is pride, and pride is a rejection of God. Spiritually speaking, the person who relies on himself, rather than trusting God, is like a child running away from home. It is a rejection of one's parents, a declaration of independence. Once you've decided to go our own way, you end up bearing the worries that come with that choice. Once you have left behind the One who watches over you, you leave behind any source of true comfort.

So which of the above three reasons best describes why you are anxious?

- *Do you not believe that God is able to help you?* He is the Maker of heaven and earth: of course he can help you!
- *Do you not believe that God is willing to help you?* Well, meditate on this Psalm. Six times it says: "He cares."
- *Or is it simply that you'd rather go your own way?* If you want to tackle life on your own terms then you're on your own! God can't do what He desires to do - He can't care for you.

For a stress-free life, like the Psalmist, we need to openly acknowledge our need. *Where does your help come from? Your help comes from the Lord!*

As you lift your eyes to any troubles that lie ahead - what are you going to do about it? In the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews says to a group of fearful Christians, **"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the**

***author and perfecter of our faith.***” Don't lift your eyes to the hills and be fearful; lift your eyes to the cross and be faithful.

Where does your help really come from???